



# eNAPUS Legislative & Political Bulletin

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## Organizing the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress

During the course of the past 2 weeks, Congress began to fill Committee slots. Generally, the House and Senate Leadership designate on which Committees their members serve. The Senate completed its task. However, the House has not because it has yet to determine the "committee ratios." That is, the number of Democrats vs. Republicans on each Committee. Senate Democrats enjoy a slim one-seat majority on each panel, by virtue of a 51-49 seat Senate majority. However, on the other side of the Capitol, some sensitive Committees like the House Rules Committee, which establishes "rules of debate" on legislation, are skewed disproportionately to the majority party. Other Committees tend to reflect the actual partisan composition of the House.

The slim Senate margin has far-reaching ramifications. The illness suffered by our good friend and strong NAPUS ally Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) encouraged political observers to speculate on what would happen if he is unable to continue to serve. Fortunately, he is recovering from his medical emergency, so the speculation is moot. NAPUS has conveyed to the Senator's office our best wishes for a complete and speedy recovery. We look forward to working with him and his staff during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### **Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

<i>Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), Chairman</i>	<i>Susan Collins (R-ME), Ranking</i>
<i>Carl Levin (D-MI)</i>	<i>Ted Stevens (R-AK)</i>
<i>Daniel Akaka (D-HI)</i>	<i>George Voinovich (R-OH)</i>
<i>Tom Carper (D-DE)</i>	<i>Norm Coleman (R-ME)</i>
<i>Mark Pryor (A-AR)</i>	<i>Tom Coburn (R-OK)</i>
<i>Mary Landrieu (D-LA)</i>	<i>Pete Domenici (R-NM)</i>
<i>Barack Obama (D-IL)</i>	<i>John Warner (R-VA)</i>
<i>Claire McCaskill (D-MO)</i>	<i>John Sununu (R-NH)</i>
<i>Jon Tester (D-MT)</i>	

Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) was the only Democrat who left the Committee. Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) departed the Committee by virtue of his electoral defeat. Sens. Landrieu and Obama will join freshman McCaskill and Tester as the new Democrat members. GOP Sen. Sununu will rejoin the Committee after a 2-year hiatus.

Although the House has yet to finalize its Committee assignments, the Democrat Leadership has appointed the following freshmen to the House Government Reform Committee: *Representatives-elect Paul Hodes (D-NH) and Chris Murphy (D-CT)*.

## NAPUS President Invited to Historic Signing of Postal Reform Legislation

Earlier today, the White House extended NAPUS President Dale Goff a formal invitation to attend the ceremony, at which President George W. Bush will sign into law HR 6407, the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act. It is expected that the bipartisan Congressional team of postal reform advocates will be on hand for the event. As anticipated Congress delivered to the White House the Congressionally-approved measure on Monday, December 11. The US Constitution provides the President with 10 calendar days to sign legislation. If not, since Congress has adjourned, the bill would be "pocket vetoed." So, on Wednesday, December 20 President Bush will sign the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act into law. The legislation will be effective immediately.

This week, the overwhelming majority of the postal community has been either basking in the afterglow of passage, or a minority has been sulking over its anticipated enactment. No matter in which category organizations consider themselves, a new postal paradigm will exist after Wednesday. The question is how the groups will react and conform to the new world. Indeed, if the USPS avails itself to the new opportunities and tools with which the legislation equips the agency, then a new dawn has emerged for the Postal Service and its employees. Indeed, notwithstanding a new rate index system that, on first glance, may seem confining. Under the legislation, there are novel ways in which the USPS can classify and create new postal products. In addition, the bill provides ample opportunity for the Postal Service to reclassify present postal products to maximize profitability. Yes, for the first time in history we can use the phrase "postal profit." Employees from craft to senior management can reap the reward of an efficient responsive service to the mailing public. Moreover, the agency will not be subjected to litigious and protracted rate cases every time it needs to adjust rates, so long as the rate fits within the index. Currently, any and all rate adjusts are victimized by such a long-drawn-out process. In addition, rates are presently capped between rates cases, with virtually no ability for the USPS to raise rates to reflect the economic reality of inflation.

Of course, these new tools and freedoms come with a new level of responsibility. Accountability to a newly empowered Postal Regulatory Commission is what the Board of Governors have bristled at for the last year or two. In fact, it is the major reason that the Governors sent a letter of opposition to the Senate early this year. However, it became abundantly clear that, for the USPS to remain viable, it must meet certain defined and publicly available goals in order to address the needs of both residential and commercial mailers (i.e., our customers). A bipartisan group of Members of Congress insisted that service standards be included in the final product.

NAPUS anticipates that during the early course of 2007, Congress, the USPS and its stakeholders will be scouring the new statute to determine where modification would improve its implementation and fix any errors that may have been drafted into it. These revisions are often referred to as "technical corrections." Ordinarily, substantive changes are not included in such a bill. However, postmasters can be sure that NAPUS will be involved in this process.

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